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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAIA 000063

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SNAR](#) [PU](#) [CV](#)
SUBJECT: CAPE VERDE TO HOST ECOWAS GUINEA BISSAU ROUND TABLE; INVITES
USG PARTICIPTION

REF: PRAIA 0051

CLASSIFIED BY: Marianne Myles, Ambassador, AMEMBASSY PRAIA,
State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Cape Verde Foreign Minister Jose Brito convoked Ambassador on 27 March for a briefing on the results of the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) that took place in Praia on Wednesday 25 March. According to Brito, the CPLP countries that are most interested in helping Guinea Bissau are Angola, Portugal and Brazil. Brito wants to rally international help to investigate the recent assassinations, stabilize the country, and assist with timely progress towards national elections (though he admitted it was unlikely Guinea Bissau could meet the constitutionally mandated goal of an election within 60 days). In pursuit of these goals, and in support of ECOWAS actions to date, Brito and ECOWAS are calling for an international conference on the future of security reform in Guinea Bissau, to take place in Praia, Cape Verde, on 20 April. Secretary of State Clinton has been invited to participate. End Summary

¶2. (C) As previewed in reftel, Brito individually addressed the issues that had been outlined in the ECOWAS communique of March ¶19. He covered:

a) Impunity: Brito pointed out that the assassinated Bissau-Guinean Armed Forces Chief of Staff, Tagme Na Waie, was the third GOGB official to suffer that fate. He therefore believes it is critical for an international commission to find out what really happened. The process of national reconciliation cannot start until this is put to rest, he said. However, for the inquiry into the assassinations to be useful, there needs to be protection or no one will speak up. GOGB Minister of Foreign Affairs Maria Adiatu Djalo Nandingna told Brito confidentially that she does not feel safe and cannot speak freely. The Minister of the Army reportedly said privately that if he says publicly what he knows, then he "will be a dead man tomorrow," and the Attorney General has made similar comments.

b) Elections: Guinea Bissau simply has no technical capacity to hold elections in 60 days, Brito said. The interim president needs the political agreement of all parties, including civil society, to decide upon a later date. He saw the only two options as June/July or November (the intervening months constituting the rainy season when it would be impossible for

people to get to the polls). (Note: Since this 27 March meeting with Brito, on 2 April, the Government of Guinea Bissau announced that the national elections would indeed be pushed back to 120 days from the original 60, suggesting an election would be held in late June. End note.) Even with such a delay, Guinea Bissau will need money to pay the costs of the election; Brito opined that this is critical so that lack of money cannot be cited as an excuse for not holding elections in a timely fashion. Brito noted that there are several candidates who might be viable; however, Guinea Bissau is now at a crossroads and needs a president who will be a unifier, not a divider. He further opined that Guinea Bissau's PAIGC party can determine the elections -- if the party is united and supports a candidate, that candidate will win. However, if the party is divided, then it will not be clear where the power center will go. Whatever happens, Brito said, there needs to be impartiality on the part of the government. According to Brito, last week the Prime Minister said publicly that the interim president would be a good president and outside influence/interference in the process is not acceptable.

c) Security of physical institutions: According to Brito, following the deaths of President Vieira and Chief of Staff Tagme Na Waie, the military is firmly in control in Guinea Bissau and no one feels safe. There was not a coup in the normal sense, but there was in his view a "virtual coup," since no one is prepared to say or do anything that is contrary to the wishes of the military. Brito reported that a lawyer was taken to jail for talking against the new chief of staff. (Comment: Brito could be referring to former Prime Minister and opposition party leader Francisco Jose Fadul, who told press on April 2 that he had been assaulted and intimidated by "men in uniform." End Comment.) President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas traveled to New York the week of March 31 where he reportedly will look into the possibility of UN peacekeeping troops being deployed -- even though there is no visible war underway in Guinea Bissau.

d) Drugs: It is essential to stop the flow of drugs through Guinea Bissau, Brito said, as drugs are such a destabilizing factor. According to Brito, Brazil and Angola are prepared to send troops if requested by the UN. Brito reported that Angola is even prepared to send in troops unilaterally, even though they recognize such a move could be problematic. Since the U.S. is on the UN Security Council, Brito would like to see the U.S. agree to the deployment of UN troops to Guinea Bissau.

e) Security reform in Guinea Bissau has been talked about for several years. Guinea Bissau has asked for help at the ECOWAS level in the past, but the situation has not changed. The largest problem in Guinea Bissau, said Brito, is the army. The troops do not have decent living conditions (for example, they have neither mattresses nor kitchens in the barracks) and "they think like freedom fighters -- they will listen to anyone who promises them a better life." The composition of the army is badly unbalanced, Brito said: 80% of the army is officers and only 20% troops. Clearly the armed forces need to be restructured. (Comment: This echoes the comments of the Cape Verdean Director General of Defense Pedro Reis, who told DCM recently that while the CV Armed Forces had professionalized, reformed to meet the new threats, and submitted to civilian control, the GB Armed Forces has done none of those things. End comment.) Brito is also concerned over the lack of control and hierarchy within the armed forces, noting that 95% of the GBAF are from the same ethnic tribe, the Balanta, a tribe that he described as horizontal with no hierarchy. Their society is composed of several groups, he said, which is not a workable arrangement in the army context.

13. (SBU) In an invitation dated 31 March and signed jointly by GOCV Foreign Minister Brito and GOGB Foreign Minister Maria Adiatu Djalo Nandingna, Brito and Nandingna convey the ECOWAS Security and Mediation Council's 19 March decision to formally call for a Round Table of the coordination and implementation of a program of reform of the defense and security sectors in Guinea Bissau. The two ministers go on to formally invite the participation of Secretary of State Clinton at the event, scheduled for 20 April. (A copy of the invitation and the

ECOWAS-supplied informal translation will be provided to AF/W.)

14. (SBU) In preparation for the April 20 event, ECOWAS has prepared a concept paper, dated 30 March. In this concept paper, they make clear their view that "it is imperative to move quickly from planning to action. It is time to move from developing action plans and making pledges to implementation, before the situation deteriorates further... The roundtable is not a conference to develop yet another strategy document. It is also not another pledging conference...the roundtable will have to be used to reach a consensus, develop a road map and reach an agreement to initiate the daunting task ahead with the appropriate institutional framework and process for follow-ups, monitoring, and evaluation. Additionally, the roundtable must be used to obtain the commitment by all actors to undertaking the necessary actions." (A copy of the concept paper will be provided to AF/W.)

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